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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 424th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 22 June 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 47/59 OF 9 DECEMBER 1992 (continued)

1. Mr. WU Zhengjiang (China) said that his country had always supported the idea of establishing a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, had taken an active part in the Ad Hoc Committee's work and had spoken in favour of holding the Colombo Conference. It had hoped that the Indian Ocean would have become a zone of peace as early as possible. Unfortunately, however, the goals provided for in the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace had still not been realized and the Conference on the Indian Ocean had not yet been held.

2. In order to translate into practice the noble aim of establishing a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, the international community must exert efforts in two areas. First, the great Powers outside the region must cease their interference in the affairs of the States of the region and must respect the sovereignty and independence of the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean. Those countries must relinquish any form of military presence or occupation in the Indian Ocean region, whether on land, in the air or at sea, must dismantle all military installations and must give practical expression to the provisions of the Declaration.

3. Secondly, on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty, non-intervention in internal affairs, equal rights, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence, the countries of the region must promote the strengthening of peace, friendship and cooperation with one another. Military force should be used only in defence of one's own territory, not as a threat to another State, and must certainly not be used as a weapon of aggression or occupation vis-à-vis another country. To safeguard security and stability in the region and to achieve the goals of the Declaration, the countries of the region must take practical steps to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons or of any other weapon of mass destruction.

4. The international situation following the end of the cold war had created favourable opportunities for realizing the goal of establishing the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. In resolution 47/59, adopted at the forty-seventh session, the General Assembly had requested the Ad Hoc Committee to consider new alternative approaches leading to the achievement of the goals contained in the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and as considered at the Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean held in July 1979, taking into account the changing international situation. A new moment had arrived in the Ad Hoc Committee's work. Full advantage must be taken of the favourable situation and, pursuant to resolution 47/59, alternative approaches to the achievement of the goals in the Declaration must be worked out.

5. His delegation noted with appreciation the proposals made by a number of delegations and considered that they should be discussed in detail with a view

(Mr. Wu Zhengjiang, China)

to the establishment of a common basis for settling existing differences of opinion and realizing the ultimate goal, namely, declaring the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

6. The Chinese delegation would support the Chairman in his efforts to continue consultations with the countries which were no longer participating in the Ad Hoc Committee's work, with a view to persuading them to renew their participation. In the current favourable conditions, they could make their contribution to the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean and the strengthening of international peace and security.

7. Mr. MORADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that Iran attached great importance to the 1971 Declaration and the Ad Hoc Committee's work, not only because it suffered from the foreign military presence in the Indian Ocean in general and in the Persian Gulf region in particular, but also because the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean served the purpose of safeguarding regional and international peace and security. After 20 years of work the Committee had arrived at a stage where it would have to take a decision regarding its future. Many members of the Committee were not taking part in its meetings because they considered that the Declaration was out of date and that some of its provisions were no longer current. At the same time, however, they endorsed the goals of the Declaration.

8. Accordingly, it would be advisable for the Ad Hoc Committee to review the Declaration. Some of its concepts and issues of substance had maintained their validity and could be taken as a basis. At the same time, certain of its provisions needed to be reviewed in the light of the changing international situation. That might induce other members of the Ad Hoc Committee to take part in its work. It was the right time to undertake such work: the cold war was over and some of the regional conflicts had already ceased. Such being the case, a review of the Declaration and the preparation of a new document would enable the Committee to carry out its mandate.

9. In addition, it would be advisable to ask the Secretary-General, with the participation of consultant experts, to address the complex ramifications of the issues involved and differing perceptions on those issues and to propose effective, verifiable measures which could help to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. Without in any way wishing to underestimate the capabilities of members of the Committee, his delegation nevertheless doubted whether the Committee, with its limited number of participants, was in a position to consider in a few days the complex ramifications of the issues involved. The definition and delimitation of the zone of peace in the Indian Ocean should be entrusted to a group established for that purpose, while the Committee itself might embark on a review of the Declaration, whose current wording was the major obstacle preventing other countries from participating in the Committee's work. In that regard, his delegation was keeping an open mind and was ready to listen to the opinions of other States.

10. Mr. NEUHAUS (Australia) said that his delegation was ready to engage in informal consultations designed to facilitate the course of the forthcoming work on issues included in the Committee's agenda. After listening with interest to

(Mr. Neuhaus, Australia)

the various proposals made, his delegation would prefer to make known its ideas at a later stage. It believed that it would be beneficial to hold informal consultations on the question of the Ad Hoc Committee's future role in the context of the First Committee during the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.